

# Mahathir: Why I seek a mandate

NST 31 MAR 1982

**KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad** said today he called for the general election at this time to get a mandate from the people "so that we can get on with the new ways of implementing our policies."

"We feel we need a mandate from the people...whether they support us or not for what we have done up to now.

"This will also enable us to

some distance.

"We are doing this as a trial to find out if Thursday is more effective than Saturday to hold the election."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said this decision is in no way an indication that the Government is planning a common week-end for the country.

"The Government has made its decision that the present different week-ends (Friday for the five States and Sunday for the rest) will stay."

On his Look-East policy, he said it could be seen from the number of Malaysians studying in Western countries — 49,000 — how much this country valued the West, while there are just over 200 Malaysian students

realise that there is an urgent need to change their work ethic.

He also said it was not true that the Look East policy was an instant decision. "I've had this in mind for a long time and have also written about discipline and work ethics."

On allegations that the development in the country was against Islam, the Prime Minister said this was not true as the development in the country was in line with the religion.

"If we do not have the knowledge and understanding, we will have to beg for the things we need.

"They say that I should not have made the invitation in a crowd but if I did not, they would have said I did not make it," he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the different races in the country have come to accept the New Economic Policy as they realised it was for the benefit of all Malaysians.

He said the tempo of development in the country will be accelerated even though the oil supply may run out one day.

The Government, he said, is ploughing back the petro-dollars into the country by investing in the industrial sector and

take follow-up action on what has been undertaken by us so far," said the Prime Minister.

In an interview on the *Hal Ehwal Semasa* (Current Affairs) programme over television tonight, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said if the election was held next year, all Government plans would be labelled as election-oriented.

The Government would overcome this problem by holding the election now, he added.

Another reason for the April election is that there are periods in a year when the election cannot be held.

## Indication

"We cannot hold the election during the Puasa month, during Hari Raya and when similar occasions are on.

"That's why the Press was able to guess so easily when the election would be held," he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir agreed that his Government was breaking tradition by holding the election on a Thursday instead of a Saturday.

He said there are five States in Malaysia where Saturday is the beginning of the week.

"There are many things that have to be done on the first day of the week in these States."

He said the people in the towns in the other States could take time off from their work to go and vote but the people in the kampungs (in the five States) would have to travel

in Japan, 150 in Manila and none in Korea.

Comparatively, he said "we are looking too much towards the West...no balance between East and West when we know that the East also has the knowledge and capability from which we can learn."

He said previously the West had many things which the rest of the world could learn. This has changed now that hedonism has set in while in the East the picture was different.

The people here still maintained their values — hardwork, loyalty and unselfishness — while taking on Western knowledge.

"It is time for us to look East to know the values and knowledge which we can pick up for the good of our country."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said this did not mean "we have to follow them 100 per cent.

"We can take the good and throw what cannot be accepted by us," he added.

He said if Malaysians can acquire 50 per cent of the Japanese work ethic, it would be good enough considering "our situation now."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the most important move towards this is for Malaysians to

"All that we have done is to ensure that we have the knowledge and capability of modern development," he said.

He also said women in Malaysia had a major role in the country "and what they are doing is not against Islam but what is needed in Islam."

To a question, he said the wearing of the turban by Muslims was not specifically Islamic.

"In the Arab countries, even non-Muslims wear the Jubah and turbans are also worn by non-Muslims.

"The people in the Arab countries wear turbans to help protect their faces, use it to carry things when the need arises and to cleanse water.

"The situation is different here. It is not necessary for Muslims to wear the turban. If they wish to do it to follow the Prophet's dressing, they can but it does not make them more Islamic."

On his invitation to Pas to join the Barisan Nasional, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said: "I made the invitation. I cannot force them to accept.

"If they see me as sincere in my invitation, they can do so but I cannot force them to think that.

## Benefit

in resource-based industries.

He also said other countries were beginning to realise that "Malaysia, as an independent country, must have a policy that serves its own interests, not theirs.

"There may be some nations that are not happy with this because they are losing by it but there are others who gain by it and they are happy," he added.